

REMARKS

The subject application previously set forth claims 1-59, of which claims 1, 3, 10, 21, 23, 30 and 41 are independent claims, and claims 41-59 were withdrawn. Prior claims 1, 2, 21, and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,556,627 (LaFollette), while claims 3-15 and 23-35 were indicated as allowed. Claims 16-20 and 36-40 were indicated as objected to, presumably for being dependent from a rejected base claim but otherwise containing allowable subject matter.

In response to the above characterizations in the January 6, 2004 Office Action, Applicants presently request to cancel claims 1, 2, 21 and 22 from the subject application, and to cancel withdrawn claims 41-59. Applicants reserve the right to pursue further applications covering such subject matter, canceled herewith for the convenience of obtaining early allowance of other claims. Applicants further request entry of presently submitted amendments that put respective claims 16 and 36 in independent form, for clear allowance of claims 16-20 and 36-40.

Since the presently requested amendments are believed to put all present claims in clear condition for allowance based on characterizations set forth in the previous Office Action, Applicants respectfully request entry of such amendments in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.116 and formal acknowledgement of allowance of all presently submitted claims.

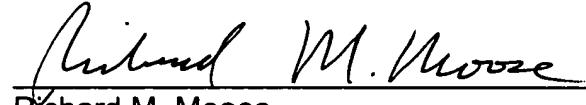
CONCLUSION:

Inasmuch as all outstanding issues have been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application, including claims 3-20 and 23-40, is in complete condition for issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance, and action to such effect is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at his convenience should only minor issues remain after consideration and entry of this Amendment and Response in order to permit early resolution of the same.

Respectfully submitted,

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